

# YOUR 2018 GUIDE TO CRUISING THE KIMBERLEY



**TOP TIPS  
FROM OUR  
EXPERTS**

**WHICH SMALL SHIP?**

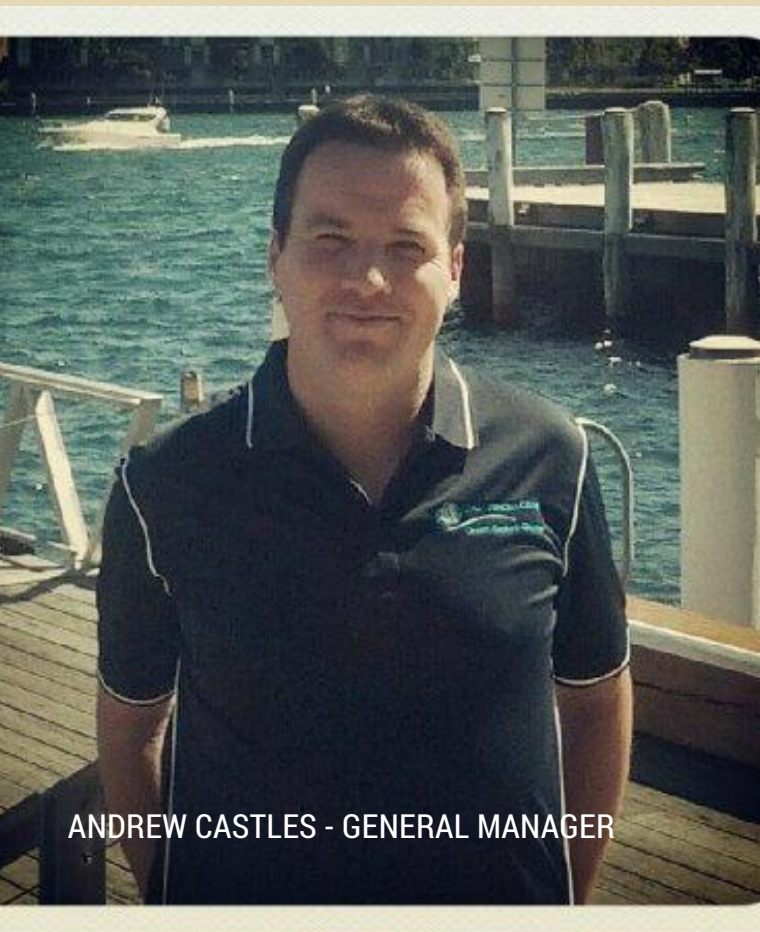
*How to choose the best ship*

**SEVEN MUST SEE ICONS**

*Make sure you see everything*

**WHEN TO GO?**

*What's the best time of year to go?*



ANDREW CASTLES - GENERAL MANAGER

## About Us

Over 21 years ago we designed and operated the Kimberley's very first expedition cruises aboard our small ship Coral Princess. Now, having recently sold Coral Princess Cruises, we're sharing our expert advice and insider tips with you to help you plan your ultimate Kimberley expedition.

We've done all the hard work for you by featuring only the very best cruising options possible; you can rest assured that the operators we work with are fully accredited and offer the most comprehensive itineraries possible. Call our team of specialists today to help plan your ultimate Kimberley adventure.



VICKI & TONY BRIGGS - FOUNDERS



# What is the Kimberley?

Located in North West Australia, the Kimberley region is truly one of the world's last frontiers and greatest wilderness areas. This pristine area is three times the size of England, yet home to just 30,000 residents.

Here, you will find some of the world's most incredible scenery, fascinating natural phenomena, beguiling wildlife and ancient civilisations, whose artwork dates back more than 20,000 years. The Kimberley offers a true once-in-a-lifetime experience.

## WHY AN EXPEDITION CRUISE?

There's no other way to experience the wonders of the Kimberley Coast than by small ship as most of the key icons are impossible to reach by road. On an expedition cruise you will also travel with a team of experts, making sure you don't miss out on any of the 'must sees'.

## WHICH SHIP SHOULD I CHOOSE?

We've featured some of our favourite and most highly recommended ships later in this guide, but your final choice will depend on your own goals and travel styles. Our specialists are on hand to help you choose.

## CAN I GO FISHING?

Many of the smaller ships are fully equipped for fishing, allowing you to catch a 'barra' or two. Make sure you let us know if fishing is a priority when choosing your ship.

## ISN'T IT EXPENSIVE?

There's no doubt a Kimberley cruise is a stretch for many budgets, but we do have a number of options available at various prices. There are many reasons why these cruises can seem expensive, including high crew to guest ratios, the cost of provisioning in remote areas and of course fuel. But is it worth the high cost? You bet!

## CAN ANYONE DO THIS TRIP?

To get the most out of this trip a reasonable level of fitness is required. Many of the walks ashore are on unmade tracks, which can be undulating and rocky. There is no age limit though - in fact we've seen a 94 year old ticking the Kimberley off his bucket list!

## WHEN SHOULD I GO?

As soon as possible! Check out the following pages for the best times to travel.



# When To Go?

## CHOOSING THE BEST MONTH TO CRUISE THE COAST

Ready to tick that that once in a lifetime Kimberley expedition cruise off your bucket list but unsure about the best time of year to experience Australia's wilderness coast? We outline each of the Kimberley's three distinct seasons to help you choose the time of year that is right for you.

Kimberley cruises operate between late March and October each year, so you can put a line through November to February straight away as its simply too hot, humid and wet, not to mention the added danger of the cyclone season.

### Waterfall Season (April & May)

One of the main drawcards of the Kimberley Coast is its iconic waterfalls - including the towering 80-metre King George and four-tiered Mitchell Falls. Most of the coast's falls are fed by the Kimberley's drenching wet season rains, so the earlier in the season you go the more spectacular the falls are. The landscape will also be covered in a brilliant green hue, as vegetation regenerates thanks to the downpour. It's not uncommon for the occasional grey and rainy day during this period, and it can still be quite humid, which can make walks ashore a bit more taxing. In our view seeing (and hearing) the full force of the falls more than makes up for the extra humidity and an occasional wet day.



## Peak Season (June, July and early August)

The most popular time of year to travel to the Kimberley, probably because the 'dry season' weather is characterised by clear blue skies and balmy days, which makes for a welcome escape from the southern states' winter chill. Depending on the amount of rain during the wet season, there might be some water still flowing over the big falls as late as August, but it will be a trickle at best. One notable exception is the iconic King Cascades on the Prince Regent River; these falls are spring fed and will have a flow year round. If you can't bear the thought of another chilly winter then June and July are probably your 'go to' months to experience the Kimberley Coast.



## Whale / Wildflower Season (September)

From August to early October each year the Kimberley Coast is the world's epicentre for whalewatching. Up to 30,000 humpbacks make their way from the Antarctic feeding grounds to the warm tropical waters of the Kimberley Coast to breed and give birth, and you will have the best seat in the house when travelling on an expedition cruise. It's common practice for the skipper to idle the ship's engines and drift with the tide whilst these majestic mammals put on playful displays around the ship. This late in the season it's likely that Mitchell Falls and King George Falls will be dry (you can always see Talbot Bay's Horizontal Falls





at least!), but you're likely to have more wildlife encounters due to native fauna having to travel further, out in the open in search of water. Wildflowers are also blooming, covering the ground in a carpet of colourful native blooms.

### **Our Verdict**

So which should you choose? It really comes down to where your interests lay; waterfalls or whales. But we think it would be a real pity to miss the grandeur and jaw dropping beauty of some of the world's most beautiful waterfalls. So if we were forced to choose, then May, when the humidity has started to subside, is the ideal time to explore the Kimberley Coast on a small ship cruise.



1800 90 20 80

[www.expeditioncruisespecialists.com](http://www.expeditioncruisespecialists.com)



# 7 Key Wonders

## MAKE SURE YOUR EXPEDITION INCLUDES THESE KEY SITES

Here's our check list of the seven greatest wonders of Australia's Kimberley Coast. When planning to go Kimberley cruising, see our hand-picked list of the best expeditions then give us a call to help you choose the cruise that is right for you, including all the must see icons!

### **Mitchell Falls (Mitchell Plateau)**

Mitchell Falls is perhaps the most photographed of all of the Kimberley's wonders. The waters of the mighty Mitchell River cascade over four tiers, with a total drop of over 80 metres. There are a number of other falls in the area well worth seeing, including Little Mertens and Big Mertens, but Mitchell Falls is the main drawcard.

The Mitchell River below the falls is not navigable by expedition ship, meaning that you can't cruise directly up to the base. Instead, you're going to need to 'chopper in'. Two expedition ships - True North and Great Escape - carry their own private helicopters, whilst other ships call in HeliSpirit (a local operator based near the Falls) to provide scenic flights. Typically a two hour excursion, including scenic flight from the ship across the Mitchell Plateau to the falls and back, and an hour to swim in the Mitchell River (above the falls - no crocs!) and take photographs will set you back about \$500 per person, but it's well worth the expense.



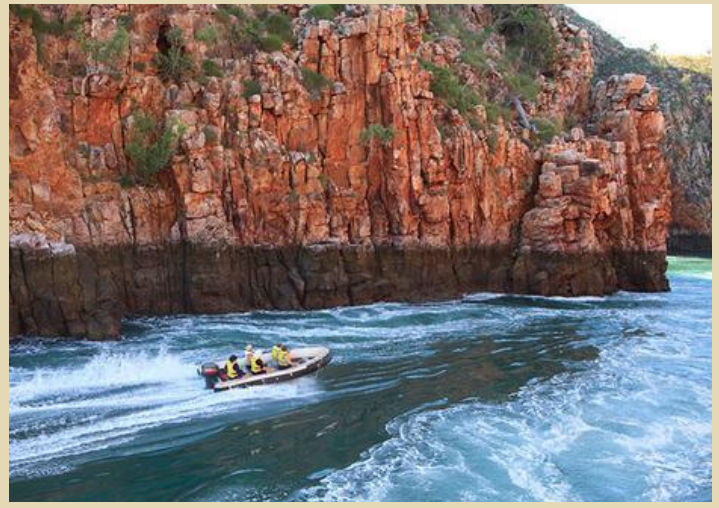


### Mermaid Boab Tree (Careening Bay)

When Phillip Parker King (that's a name you hear a lot in the Kimberley) careened his vessel the Mermaid for six weeks of repairs during his coastal survey in back in 1820, his carpenter carved details of their visit into a small boab tree. His inscription read:

*HMC Mermaid 1820*

The beach where King successfully carried out Mermaid's repairs is known as Careening Bay, and today - almost 200 years later - the twin-trunked boab tree is now twelve metres wide, the letters huge.



### Horizontal Falls (Talbot Bay)

According to naturalist and documentary-maker Sir David Attenborough Horizontal Falls is 'one of the greatest natural wonders of the world'. Massive tidal movements create a waterfall effect as water banks up against one side of the narrow cliff passage, to be repeated again on the turning tide. The tides in this area have a ten-metre variation with the affect created by the tide building up in front of the gaps faster than it can flow through them and there can be a four-metre high waterfall between the bays.

Most expedition cruise operators offer you the chance to have an adrenaline-filled inflatable zodiac ride through the falls, a real thrill and a highlight of any Kimberley cruise.



## Montgomery Reef (Camden Sound)

Imagine being anchored 20 kilometres offshore, surrounded by endless blue waters, with just a speck of the far-off horizon in the distance. Then, try to imagine the tide turning and the sea levels dropping by ten metres to expose Australia's largest inshore reef system, Montgomery Reef. Covering 400 square kilometres, Montgomery Reef is located adjacent to Doubtful Bay and is truly Australia's greatest marine spectacle.

Most expedition cruise ships time their visits to this area to coincide with the twice-daily 'reef reveals', and after all my visits to the Kimberley, experiencing Montgomery Reef at low tide never disappoints.



## King Cascades (Prince Regent River)

Not all expedition cruises feature a visit to King Cascades, as some of the bigger 100+ passenger ships are too large to be able to ferry their guests the 27 kilometres up the Prince Regent River to the base of the falls. That's a real pity as King Cascades is one of the most scenic locales in the Kimberley. The waterfall itself is around 40 metres tall, with the flow cascading down tiered rock formations. The falls are also spring fed, meaning water will be flowing year round.

Notably, back in 1987 American model Ginger Meadows famously took the plunge from a private cruiser and was tragically taken by a monster croc - who some say still patrols the Prince Regent today!



## The Bradshaw Paintings (East Kimberley & Raft Point)

When Kimberley cruising you're bound to come face to face with lots of rock art. It's everywhere you look; on cliff faces, rock overhangs and in caves. You'll learn that there are two types of art found in the Kimberley. The more modern (around 5,000 years) and prevalent is the Wandjina art, easily recognisable by the pale, circle spirit faces drawn without mouths. The second type of art you will see is a major drawcard for many travellers – the mysterious Bradshaw Paintings, known as 'Gwion Gwion' to the locals.

Named after pastoralist Joseph Bradshaw, the first European to record this distinctive style of art work back in 1891, the origin of the Bradshaw Paintings is contentious. ]

Dating back at least 20,000 years, some experts suggest that the paintings were drawn by the forefathers of the current local indigenous people, whilst others opine that the art has an Indonesian influence, and may have been produced by early traders.

Whatever the origin, these luminous, ochre figures - often decorated with tassels and ornate head-dresses are a sight to behold.

One of the best places to view both Wandjina art and the Bradshaw Paintings is at Raft Point, a spot visited by most expedition ships these days. A short hike leads up hill to a rocky overhang, where fine examples of both varieties of art can be viewed.





### King George Falls (King George River)

If you've seen Baz Luhrmann's epic 2008 film Australia you might recognise King George Falls. Located in the Northern Kimberley close to the town of Wyndham, some of the shorter 'Southern Kimberley' expeditions don't have time to visit these imposing twin falls, however if you travel aboard True North, Coral Discoverer or Coral Expeditions I the journey down the King George River is bound to be a highlight. The best time to experience these falls is at the start of the cruising season, between March and May, when the water flow is at its most powerful.

After travelling twelve kilometres up river, surrounded by towering sandstone

escarpments on either side, the sheer volume of water flowing over the falls creates a distant roar that grows in volume as you approach. On some expeditions the active can also join a challenging hike to the top of the falls for outstanding panoramas and photo opportunities.

If witnessing the Kimberley's waterfalls at their absolute best (right after the wet season) appeals to you, each March the Great Escape offers a nine day Waterfall Safari expedition that includes Mitchell Falls, King Cascades and King George Falls.



# What's It Like?

## WHAT A DAY ABOARD A KIMBERLEY CRUISE INVOLVES

After exploring the world on cruise ships ranging from 1,000 to 4,000 passengers, it came as quite a surprise to me to experience an expedition cruise.

The very term 'expedition cruise' conjures up myriad visions of abseiling down cliffs, crawling through caves or wading through a swamp.

I had this vision of waking up at 5am to trek through the jungle in search of a rare bird. After eight hours of slashing our way through the jungle covered in leeches we finally come across the last pink bird of paradise in existence.

Now, it is true that you can find really strenuous and challenging expedition style holidays if you want.

However, I soon found out that expedition cruising was nothing like that. The expedition cruises I have been on have been the most relaxing and enjoyable of my 30 year career in travel writing.

Let me take you through a day aboard a typical expedition cruise.

Today, I have something really special for you. We are visiting one of Australia's most iconic adventure destinations, the

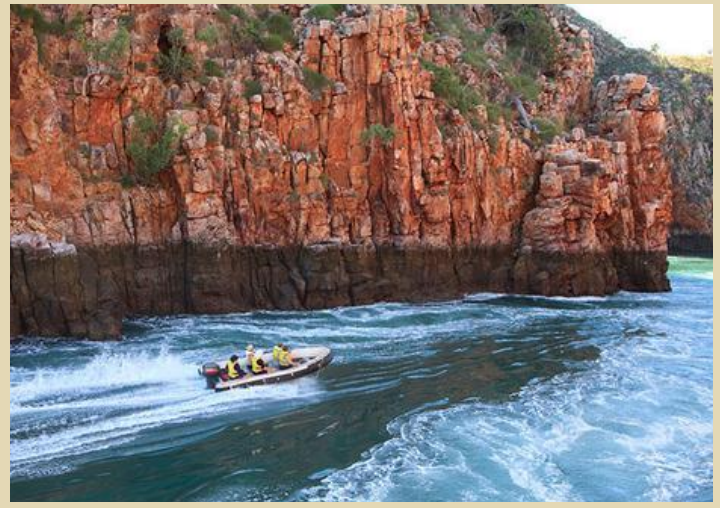


spectacular Horizontal Falls on Australia's wild Kimberley Coast.

The first thing I notice on rising at 7am is the ship entering the stunning Talbot Bay with high cliffs all around. I race upstairs to get some pics and video as the sun rises over the sea. Many of my fellow expeditioners are already up, enjoying a morning walk. Breakfast is from 7.30am and is a buffet with a wide selection of goodies available.

At 9am we walk on board our 72 seater expedition tender and settle in. I get there early so I can grab my favourite spot for filming and photography.

We go on an exploration cruise through the many striking bays and passages of this massive inlet.



The water is very still on this particular day and the huge white clouds above are mirrored in the water giving an amazing photo opportunity.

The tender's engines comes to stop and we glide through the still blue water, allowing us to fully appreciate nature at its most majestic display.

We then head for the world famous Horizontal Falls which most people on board rate as the highlight of our entire cruise. The ship's two zodiacs are waiting to us through the Falls.

In groups of five, clad in life jackets, plus the skipper, we climb from the explorer boat on to the zodiac.

It is surprisingly easy to get aboard and perch on the outer inflatable side of the zodiac.

The 12m tide is really racing through the small gap in the cliffs and looks a bit like the rapids in the Grand Canyon.

We race along bumping and jumping across the angry, swirling monster.

Am I scared? Not really, the exhilaration of that ride soon eliminates any second thoughts you may have about it all.

David Attenborough described the Horizontal Falls “one of the greatest natural wonders in the world”.

As we surge through the gap at its wildest point, it’s easy to agree with the world’s most famous nature adventurer.

We enter a wide bay and then discover another horizontal waterfall further on which has the same intensity as the first one.

Our skipper cleverly steers us through the narrow, roaring, raging gap with sheer cliffs on either side. Returning through the two falls is just as exhilarating.

Back on board the explorer tender everyone is excited about the unique adventure they have just experienced. They cheer each returning group on the zodiac and the zodiac people yell back in excitement. Surgeons from New York and CEOs from Germany are jumping and down like 10-year-olds.

We return to the ship just after midday and a mouth watering buffet awaits us. How the chefs on board can turn out such sumptuous



food in such a small galley is beyond me. I guess it's all forward planning and a natural talent for what their guests like to eat. Most of my fellow travellers have experienced fine dining around the world, so our ship's chefs have to impress with their food.

At 2pm lunch is finished and we climb aboard the explorer boat for another leisurely cruise, this time to Silica Beach on Hidden Island. We revel in its white sands and crystal waters. There's even the chance for a cooling dip. This shorter excursion is a relaxing wind down after the dramatic events of the morning.

We return to the ship just after 4pm which gives everyone time to sort through their photos or have a quick nap.

At 5.30pm I nip up to the top bar for acleansing ale with my fellow adventurers. At 6pm our Expedition Leader gives us a quick rundown of the day's events including some photos of all the action. He then lets us know the plans for the next day.

Dinner is served at 6.30pm and I enjoy a nice Australian Semillon Sauvignon Blanc with a stunning seafood à la carte dinner that would compliment even the most fastidious restaurant ashore. All the talk is about the Horizontal Falls and the amazing day we have just experienced.

An older lady from Hornsby named Madeline on my table confesses she was ready to pull out of the zodiac ride after seeing the falls.





“I never thought I’d do it even though I had dreamt about it for years. But I did it!” she said, her voice wavering. “And now I can tell my grandkids. I really achieved the dream of a lifetime” she said excitedly.

The table went quiet for a short time and then I lead a toast: “To Madeline!” Eight wine glasses clinked as one.

“To dreams,” Madeline replied raising her glass.

After dinner I head to the back of the ship where many people are enjoying the warm night air of the Kimberley. It was just one day in our lives, but what a day it was.

Like many days on an expedition cruise, it is a day we will remember forever. For Madeline, the dream of a lifetime had come true that very day.

*This piece was prepared by Dallas Sherringham, a media professional and world traveller. Dallas travelled aboard Coral Discoverer for this piece.*





# Which Ship?

## WHICH SMALL SHIPS DO WE RECOMMEND AND WHY?

Over 21 years ago we designed and operated the Kimberley's very first expedition cruises . Now, we're using all of that experience and insider knowledge to help you choose the ship and itinerary that best suits your interests and travel style.

Want to focus on the waterfalls? indigenous art? or even having a go fishing for 'Barra'? Check out our featured ships over the following pages then give us a call to hear our expert advice to help you make the right choice.





## CORAL DISCOVERER

The 72-passenger Coral Discoverer was launched in 2005 and was purpose-built for cruising the Kimberley Coast, Australian-flagged and crewed, Coral Discoverer has a flexible range of excursion craft including zodiacs and the versatile Xplorer.

A full refurbishment in late 2016 has enhanced Coral Discoverer's reputation even further, with public areas being completely redesigned and the addition of six new balcony staterooms.

Coral Discoverer is fully SOLAS-rated, actively stabilised and travels with an expert expedition team and guest lecturers to ensure a comprehensive Kimberley experience.

## 10 NIGHTS BROOME TO DARWIN & V.V

Coral Discoverer's Kimberley itinerary is the blueprint for all expeditions that followed. A ten night itinerary between Broome & Darwin (and reverse) that takes in all of the icons of the Kimberley. The Xplorer allows access to locations impossible to reach on similar-sized ships.

Highlights include King George Falls, Mitchell Falls, King Cascades, Montgomery Reef, Horizontal Falls, Raft Point, Careening Bay Boab Tree and Aboriginal Art.

[Click here to see 2018 schedules and rates.](#)



## CORAL EXPEDITIONS I

The 48-passenger classic catamaran Coral Expeditions I was purpose-built for cruising the Kimberley Coast.

The 24 onboard rooms feature natural light, with a fresh and modern decor creating a breezy feel. The ship's forward lounge is a great place to relax and enjoy the scenery in air-conditioned comfort, and the Sun Deck at the rear with a new bar outdoor area added in 2016 is another popular place to relax and take in the panoramic views.

Coral Expeditions I operates an open bridge policy, allowing you to spend time with the Captain and his maritime crew.

Follow the progression on the ship's charts and chat with Captain, or simply sit back, relax and enjoy the scenery.

## 10 NIGHTS BROOME TO DARWIN & V.V

Coral Expeditions I pioneered Kimberley Cruising back in 1996, and even today this ten night itinerary between Broome & Darwin (and reverse) features the very best that the region has to offer. The Explorer excursion tender and fleet of zodiacs allows access to locations impossible to reach on similar-sized ships.

Highlights include King George Falls, Mitchell Falls, King Cascades, Montgomery Reef, Horizontal Falls, Raft Point, Careening Bay Boab Tree and Aboriginal Art.

Click here to see 2018 schedules and rates.

[www.expeditioncruisespecialists.com](http://www.expeditioncruisespecialists.com)



## TRUE NORTH

True North features the ultimate in comfort and style. Cabins are spacious and feature modern décor, large ensembles, satellite telephones and in-cabin entertainment.

Passenger numbers are limited (36) and a young Australian crew (20) provides personalised service. Multiple expedition vessels take guests away in small groups to experience wilderness 'up close' and, to add yet another dimension to adventure, most cruise options feature an onboard helicopter.

Carefully crafted itineraries allow guests opportunity to 'experience the destination' – daily activities can include scenic walks, helicopter flights, fishing, snorkelling, culture, picnics, nature, diving, exploring and much more!

## 14 NIGHTS BROOME TO WYNDHAM & V.V

True North's most comprehensive itinerary is a 14 night journey between Broome and Wyndham, taking in all the highlights plus a few secret spots known only to the crew of True North. Fishing is also a highlight on all True North voyages in the Kimberley.

In addition to the 14 night programme you can choose shorter 11 night Waterfall Safari and 8 night Snapshot and Barramundi cruises.

Whichever itinerary you choose you can expect an exciting adventure in the Kimberley aboard the legendary True North.

Click here to see 2018 schedules and rates.



## GREAT ESCAPE

With seven executive staterooms, MV Great Escape caters for up to only 14 guests. Each room is fully air-conditioned and features a queen-size bed, generous private en suite, flat screen television, DVD player and personal fridge.

Guests also have access to the onboard helicopter, which provides a thrilling aerial view of the Kimberley Coast's enchanting wilderness on the way to the most remote Indigenous art-sites, fishing spots, waterfalls, and swimming-holes.

The experienced and hospitable Australian crew is waiting to welcome you aboard, so enquire today about when you can make your next Great Escape.

## 7 NIGHTS BROOME TO BROOME

The Great Escape 's 7 night Broome to Broome itinerary focuses on the spectacular gorges and icons of the southern Kimberley. Concluding at Mitchell Falls, the journey finishes with a charter flight back to Broome. This is a great Kimberley experience for guests with limited time.

There's also an incredibly popular 8 night Waterfall Safari at the end of the wet season and a comprehensive 13 night voyage between Broome and Wyndham.

[Click here to see 2018 schedules and rates.](#)



## KIMBERLEY QUEST II

The custom-built 25 metre Kimberley Quest II is fully air-conditioned and is equipped with a helipad, spa, comfy en suited cabins and offers indoor and outdoor alfresco areas so there will always be plenty of room to take in the scenery and breathtaking sunsets.

Accommodating just 18 guests and seven Australian crew, your holiday of a lifetime can be enjoyed with fellow travellers in intimate surrounds. All cabins feature private en suites, individual air-conditioning, viewing windows, mini-refrigerators and are serviced daily by your hostess.

Carrying three excursion tenders, days are filled with myriad activities both on and off land, exploring the spectacular region with your very own local guide who has extensive knowledge of the Kimberley coastline.

## 9 NIGHTS BROOME TO BROOME

One of Kimberley Quest II's most popular itineraries is the 9 Night Adventure Quest. This expedition departs Broome and heads as far north as the King Cascades on the Price Regent River before returning to Broome. Other highlights include the Horizontal Falls, Montgomery Reef, fishing in Camden Harbour and the Buccaneer Archipelago.

If you've got more time to enjoy the Kimberley, there's also a 13 night expedition between Broome and Wyndham, taking in the icons of both the south and north Kimberley.

Click here to see 2018 schedules and rates.

[www.expeditioncruisespecialists.com](http://www.expeditioncruisespecialists.com)

# More Choice?

## A RANGE OF OPTIONS FOR EVERY TASTE.

There's so many options in the Kimberley it's hard to know where to begin. If you're fans of a particular cruiseline - whether it be Silverseas, Ponant or even APT, we've got those stylish options covered for you as well, simply call us for the latest details.

## AND BUDGET!

When you book with Expedition Cruise Specialists you're always guaranteed the best price. Whether you're sparing no expense, or making every dollar count, you can rest assured that we have a range of ships on offer that are sure to appeal to most budgets.





# EXPEDITION CRUISE SPECIALISTS

*Intrepid World Exploration*

TO MAKE YOUR KIMBERLEY CRUISING  
DREAMS BECOME A REALITY:

**FREECALL 1800 90 20 80**

EMAIL [INFO@EXPEDITIONCRUISESPECIALISTS.COM](mailto:INFO@EXPEDITIONCRUISESPECIALISTS.COM)

ONLINE @ [WWW.EXPEDITIONCRUISESPECIALISTS.COM](http://WWW.EXPEDITIONCRUISESPECIALISTS.COM)

